

## HAPPY HOLIDAY

when christmas nears, singles cringe  
at the spectre of holiday blues.  
that's what the LA Times told me.  
i couldn't disagree more.

when she was around, my depression  
began the day after thanksgiving,  
lasted til July: the time it took  
to rescue a foundered credit card  
swamped by waves of gifts she felt  
all should have, not need.

now, i give only gifts with thought  
behind them: first editions, tickets  
to New York or a Lakers' game,  
encourage the exchange of that  
which money cannot buy. this year  
Paul presented me with his first short story,  
while Casey offered up his first game  
with ten assists. i strolled the malls  
above the crush, dancing in my head  
to Frank Sinatra's "Christmas Waltz,"  
and for the first time in twenty years  
heard the sweet sound of Christmas bells.

## ENROLLED

a bag lady is taking my short story class.  
she comes replete with tennies, half stockings  
sagging silklessly below the knee, an  
ever-present bulky-knit sweater that  
no doubt doubles as her sleeping blanket.  
about 65-70, she writes her tests on the  
back of stationery from Mottell's Mortuary.  
is that where she curls up at night?

i love her.

professors of literature are always  
stressing the relationship of  
literature to life, but this is the first  
time a page of regional realism  
has walked into my classroom.